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A

THIRD LETTER

TO THE

Editor of the Edinburgh Weekly Journal,

FROM

MALACHI MALAGROWTHER, Esq.

ON THE

PROPOSED CHANGE OF CURRENCY,

AND

OTHER LATE ALTERATIONS,

AS THEY AFFECT, OR ARE INTENDED TO AFFECT,

THE

KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND

Macduff. Stands Scotland where it did?
Rosse. Alas! poor country.

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1826.

this question, with much feeling of gratification from what I saw and heard; but still a little disappointed that no one appeared on the opposite side, excepting one gentleman, ("self pulling," as Captain Crowe says, "against the whole ship's crew,") whose eloquence used no other argument than by recommending implicit deference to the wisdom of Ministers. I am a pretty stanch Tory myself, but not up to this point of humility. I never have nor will bargain for an implicit surrender of my private judgement in a national question of this sort. I am but an unit, but of units the whole sum of society is composed. On the present question, had I been the born servant of Ministers, I would have used to them the words of Cornwall's dependant, when he interferes to prevent his master from treading out Gloster's eyes—

> I have served you ever since I have been a child,
> But better service have I never done you,
> Than now to bid you *Hold*.

Or in a yet more spirited passage in the same drama—

> ——— Be Kent unmannerly,
> When Lear is mad.

To return to the business. By the unanimity of the meeting, I lost an opportunity of making a very smart extempore speech, which I had sate up half the night for the purpose of composing. To have so much eloquence die within me unuttered, excited feelings like those of Sancho, when, in the deserts of the Sierra Morena, his good things rotted in his gizzard. To console me, however, I found, on my return to my lodgings in the Lawn-market, my own lucubrations blazing in the goodly form of two responsible pamphlets. I seized on them as if I had never seen them before, and recited the more animated passages aloud, striding up and down a room, in which, from its dimensions, striding is not very convenient. I ended with reading aloud the motto, which I designed in the pride of my heart to prefix to my immortal twins, when, side by side, under the same comely cover, they shall travel down to posterity as a crown octavo ;—

He set a bugle to his mouth,
And blew a blast sae shrill,
The trees in greenwood shook thereat,
Sae loud rang ilka hill.

But while I mentally claimed for myself the honour of alarming Scotland, from Coldstream Bridge to the far Highlands, I was giving, by the noise I made, far greater alarm to my neighbour, Christopher Chrysal, who keeps the small hardware and miscellaneous shop under the turnpike stair. Now, sir, you must know that Chrysal deals occasionally in broken tea-spoons and stray sugar-tongs, dismantled lockets and necklaces, (which have passed with more or less formality from ladies to their waiting-maids,) seals, out of which valets have knocked the stones that the setting might be rendered available, and such other small gear,—nay, I once saw an old silver coffee-pot in his possession. On the score, therefore, of being connected with the precious metals by his calling, neighbour Chrysal has set himself up for a patron and protector of Gold and Silver, and a stout contender for Bullion currency. With a half-crown in one hand, and a twenty-shilling note in the other, he will spout like a player over the two pictures in Hamlet, and it is great to hear him address them alternately—

THIS is the thing itself—Off, off, ye lendings!

But with all the contempt he expressed for the paper substitute, I have always seen that it steals quietly back to the solitude of his little pocket-book. Indeed, the barber says Mr Chrysal has other reasons for wishing a change of currency, or a currency of change, in respect of his own acceptances not being in these sharp times quite so locomotive as usual—They love the desk of the holder, sir, better than the counter of his great Neighbours in Bank Street. You understand me—but I hate scandal.

I had no sooner apologized to Christopher for the disturbance I had occasioned, (which I did with some shame of countenance,) than I politely offered him a copy of my pamphlet. He thanked me, but added with a grin, (for you know no man is a prophet in his own common stair,) that he had nothing particular to wrap up at present: "But in troth, Mr Malachi," said he, "I looked over your pamphlet in the reading-room, and I must tell you as a friend, you have just made a fool of yourself, Mr Malachi." "A fool!" replied I; "when, how, and in what manner?" "Ye have set out, sir," replied he,—for Chrysal is a kind of orator, and

speaks as scholarly and wisely as his neighbours, —"with assuming the principle, which you should have proved.—You say, that in consequence of restoring the healthful currency of the precious metals, instead of keeping those ragged scraps of paper, Scotland will experience a want of the circulating medium, by which deprivation her industry will be cramped, her manufactures depressed, her fisheries destroyed, and so forth. But you know nothing of the nature of the precious metals, and how should you?"

"Why, not by dealing in old thimbles, broken buckles, and children's whistles, certainly, or stolen *sprecherie*," said I; "but speak out, man, wherein do I evince ignorance of the nature of the precious metals—tell me that?"

"Why, Mr Malachi Malagrowther," said my friend, in wrath, "I pronounce you ignorant of the most ordinary principles of Political Economy. In your unadvised tract there, you have shown yourself as irritable as Balaam, and as obstinate as his ass. You are making yourself and other people fidgetty about the want of gold, to supply the place of that snuff-paper of yours; now in this I repeat you are ignorant."

Here he raised his voice, as if speaking *ex cathedra*. "Gold," continued he, "is a commodity itself, though it be also the representative of other commodities; just as a Banker is a man, though his business is to deal in money. Gold, therefore, like all other commodities, will flow to the place where there is a demand for it. It will be found, assure yourself, wherever it is most wanted; just as, if you dig a well, water will percolate into it from all the neighbourhood. Twenty years ago you could not have seen a cigar in Edinburgh. Gillespie, the greatest snuff-merchant of his day, would not have known what you wanted had you asked him for one; and now the shop-windows of the dealers are full of real Havannahs,—and why?—because you see every writer's apprentice with a cigar in his mouth. It is the demand that makes the supply, and so it will be with the gold. The balance of free-trade, whether the commodity be gold or grain, will go where the one finds mouths to be fed, the other a currency to be supported. What sent specie into the lagoons of Venice, and into the swamps of Holland formerly, as well as into the emporium of London now, while

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large cities, situated under a finer climate, and in a more fertile country, were and are comparatively destitute of the precious metals?—what, save the tendency of commerce, like water, to find its own just level, and to send all the commodities subject to its influence, the precious metals included, to the points where they are most wanted?"

Now, Mr Journalist, I am a man of a quick temper, but somewhat of a slow wit; and though it struck me that there was something fallacious in this argument, yet, bolstered out as it was by his favourite metaphor, it sounded so plausible, that the right answer did not at once occur to me. Chrysal went on in triumph: "You speak of your Fisheries and Kelp manufacture, and such like, and seem to dread that they will be all ruined for want of a circulating medium. But, sir, one of two things must happen. Either, FIRST, assuming that these branches of industry are beneficial to the individuals, and make advantageous returns; as such they will have the usual power of attracting towards them the specie necessary to carry them on, and of course no change whatever will take place. Or, SE-

CONDLY, these fisheries, and so forth, produce no adequate return for the labour expended on them, and are therefore a compulsory species of manufacture, like those establishments instituted at the direct expense, and under the immediate control of government, which we see fading in despotic countries, or only deriving a sickly existence by the expenditure of the Sovereign, and not by their own natural vigour. In that latter case," he pursued, "those fishing and kelping operations are not productive—are useless to the country—and ought not to be carried on an hour longer; they only occasion the mis-employment of so much capital, the loss of so much labour. Leave your kelp-rocks to the undisturbed possession of seals and mermaids, if there be any—you will buy *barilla* cheaper in South America. Send your Highland fishers to America and Botany Bay, where they will find plenty of food, and let them leave their present sterile residence in the utter and undisturbed solitude for which Nature designed it. Do not think you do any hardship in obeying the universal law of nature, which leads wants and supplies to draw to their just and

proper level, and equalize each other; which attracts gold to those spots, and those only, where it can be profitably employed, and induces man to transport himself from the realms of famine to those happier regions, where labour is light and subsistence plentiful.

"Lastly," said the unconscionable Christopher, "sweep out of your head, Mr Malachi, all that absurd rubbish of ancient tradition and history about national privileges—you might as well be angry with the Provost who pulled down the Lucken-booths. They do not belong to this day, in which so many changes have taken place, and so many more are to be expected. We look for what is USEFUL, sir, and to what is useful only; and our march towards utility is not to be interrupted by reference to antiquated treaties, or obsolete prejudices. So, while you sit flourishing your claymore, Mr Malachi, on the top of your Articles of Union, very like the figure of a Highlander on the sign of a whisky-office, take care you are not served as the giant who built his castle on the marvellous bean-stalk—Truth comes like the old woman with the 'cuttie-axe'—it costs but a swashing blow or two,

and down comes Malachi and his whole system."
—So saying, *exit* Christopher, *ovans*.

There was such a boldness and plausibility about the fellow, and such a confidence in the arguments which he expressed so fluently, that I felt a temporary confusion of ideas, and was obliged to throw myself into what has been, for many generations, the considering position of the Malagrowther family: that is to say, I flung myself back in our hereditary easy-chair, fixing my eyes on the roof, but keeping them, at the same time, half shut; having my hands folded, and twirling my thumbs slowly around each other, a motion highly useful in unravelling and evolving the somewhat tangled thread of the ideas. Thus seated, in something short of two hours I succeeded in clearing out the ravelled skean, which evolved itself in as orderly a coil before me as if it had been touched by the rod of Prince Percinet, in the fairy tale, and I am about to communicate the result. I must needs own that my discoveries went so far as was like to have involved you in an examination of the general principles on which the doctrine of currency depends. But since, *entre nous*, we might

get a little beyond our depth on the subject, I have restrained myself within the limits of the question, as practically applicable to Scotland.

My present business is to inquire how this meditated change of circulation, supposing it forcibly imposed on us, is to be accomplished—by what magic art, in other words, our paper is to be changed into gold, without some great national distress, nay, convulsion, *in transitu?*

My neighbour deems anxiety in this case quite ridiculous. Gold, he says, is a commodity, and whenever its presence becomes necessary, there it will appear. Guineas, according to Christopher, are like the fairy goblets in Parnell's tale,

> ——that with a wish come nigh,
> And with a wish retire.

I don't know how it may be in national necessities, but I have some reason to think that friend Chrysal has not, any more than I have myself, found the maxim true, in so far as concerns our personal experience. I heartily wish, indeed, this comfortable doctrine extended to individual cases, and that the greater occasion a poor devil had for money, the more certain he should be of his wants being supplied by the

arrival of that obliging article, which is said to come wherever it is wanted. Since Fortunatus's time, the contrary has in general proved to be the case, and I cannot deny it would be very convenient to us to have his system restored.

And yet there is some truth in what my neighbour says; for if a man is indispensably obliged to have a sum of money, why he must make every effort to raise it. Supposing I was in business, and threatened with insolvency, I might find myself under the necessity of getting cash by selling property at an under rate, or procuring loans at usurious inter et on what I retained, and in that ruinous manner I might raise money, because still nearer ruin stared me in the face if I did not. The question is, how long supplies so obtained could continue?—Not an instant longer than I have articles to sell or to pawn. After this, my usual wants would be as pressing, but I might wish my heart out ere I found a groat to relieve them—No fairy will leave a silver penny in my shoe. Now I fear it must be by some such violent sacrifices, as those in the case supposed, that Scotland must purchase

and maintain her metallic currency, if her present substitute is debarred.

Mr Chrysal's proposition should not then run, that gold will come when it is most needed, but should have been expressed thus,—that in countries where the presence of gold is rendered indispensable, it must be obtained, whatever price is given for it, while the means of paying such a price remain.

He amuses himself, indeed, and puzzles his hearers, by affirming that gold is like water, and, like water when poured out, it will find its level.—A metaphor is no argument in any instance; but I think I can contrive in the present to turn my friend's own water-engine against him. Scotland, sir, is not *beneath* the level to which gold flows naturally. She is *above* that level, and she may perish for want of it ere she sees a guinea, without she, or the State for her, be at the perpetual expense of maintaining, by constant expenditure of a large per centage, that metallic currency which has a natural tendency to escape from a poor country back to a rich one. Just so, a man might die of thirst on the top of a Scottish hill, though a river

or a lake lay at the base of it. Therefore, if we insist upon the favourite comparison of gold to water, we must conceive the possibility of the golden Pactolus flowing up Glencroe in an opposite direction to the natural element, which trots down from the celebrated *Rest and be Thankful.*

If my friend would consult the clerk of the Water Company, at his office in the Royal Exchange, he would explain the matter at once. "Let me have," says Mr Chrysal, "a pipe of water to my house."—"Certainly, sir; it will cost you forty shillings yearly."—"The devil it will! Why, surely the Lawnmarket is lower than the Reservoir on the Castlehill? It is the nature of water to come to a level. What title have you to charge me money, when the element is only obeying the laws of Nature, and descending to its level?"—"Very true, sir," replies the clerk; "but then it was no law of Nature brought it to the reservoir, at a height which was necessary to enable us to disperse the supply over the city. On the contrary, it was an exertion of Art in despite of Nature. It was forced hither by much labour and ingenuity. Lakes were formed, aqueducts constructed,

rivers dammed up, pipes laid for many miles. Without immense expense, the water could never have been brought here; and without your paying a rateable charge, you cannot have the benefit of it."

This is exactly the case with the gold currency. It must have a natural tendency to centre in London, for the exchange is heavily against Scotland. We have the whole public income, four millions a-year, to remit thither. Independent of that large and copious drain, we have occasion to send to England the rents of non-resident proprietors, and a thousand other payments to make to London, which must be done in specie, or by bills payable in the metropolis. So that the circulation moves thither of free will, like a horse led by the bridle; while Scotland's attempts to detain it, are like those of a wild Highlandman catching his pony by the tail. Or, to take a very old comparison, London is like Aboulcasem's well, full of gold, gems, and everything valuable. The rich contents are drawn from it by operations resembling those of a forcing-pump, which compel small portions into the extreme corners of the kingdom; but

all these golden streamlets, when left to themselves, trickle back to the main reservoir.

My friend's idea of a voluntary, unsolicited, and unbought supply of metallic currency, is like the reasoning of old Merrythought, when, with only a shilling in his pocket, he expresses a resolution to continue a jovial course of life. "But how wilt thou come by the means, Charles?" says his wife. "How?" replied the gay old gentleman, in a full reliance on his resources,—"How?—Why, how have I done hitherto, these forty years?—I never came into my dining-room, but, at eleven and six o'clock, I found excellent meat and drink on the table. My clothes were never worn out, but next morning a tailor brought me a new suit, and, without question, it will be so ever—use makes perfectness." The dramatist has rescued his jolly epicurean out of the scrape before his slender stock was exhausted; but in what mode Scotland is to be relieved from the expense about to be imposed on a country, where industry and skill can but play a saving game, at best, against national disadvantages, is not so easy to imagine.

What may be the expense of purchasing in the outset, and maintaining in constant supply, a million and a half of gold, I cannot pretend to calculate, but something may be guessed from the following items :—To begin, like Mrs Glass's recipe for dressing a hare, *first catch your hare* —first buy your gold at whatever sacrifice of loss of exchange ; then add to the price a reasonable profit to those who are to advance the purchase-money—next insure your specie against water-thieves and land-thieves, peril of winds, waves, and rocks, from the Mint to the wharf, from the wharf to Leith, from Leith to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to the most remote parts of Scotland, unprotected by police of any kind—the insurances can be no trifle ; besides, that an accident or two, like the loss of the Delight smack the other day, with L.4000 of specie on board, will make a tolerably heavy addition to other bills of charges, as the expense of carriages, guards, and so forth—then add the items together, and compute the dead loss of interest upon the whole sum. The whole may be moderately calculated at an expense of more than *five per cent*, a charge which must ultimate-

ly be laid on the Scottish manufactures, agricultural operations, fisheries, and other public and private undertakings; many of which are not at present returning twelve or fifteen per cent of profit at the uttermost.

My friend Chrysal's reasoning rested on this great mistake, that he confounds the necessity of our procuring gold under the operation of the new system, and the supplies which that necessity must necessarily oblige us to purchase, with a voluntary determination of unbought treasures running up-hill to find their level at Stornoway, Tongue, or Oban. He imagines that the specie, for which we have to pay a heavy consideration, will come to our service voluntarily. I answer, in one word, the gold will come, if purchased, AND NOT OTHERWISE. The expense attending the operation will be just a tax upon the parties who pay it, with this difference, that it makes no addition to the public revenue. Every sovereign we get, which passes of course for twenty shillings, will, before it gets to the north of Scotland, have cost *one*-and-twenty. Illustrations of so plain a proposition are endless. Suppose Government had imposed a stamp-duty upon any commodity, and, whilst with some other cowl'd

neighbours I am canvassing its effects, I ask, as a party concerned,—"But how are we to come by these stamps? The branch of commerce to which they apply is not able to bear the impost." Up rises my friend Chrysal in reply—"Stamped paper," says he, "is a commodity; and, like all commodities, flows to the point where there is a demand." True—but, unhappily, when the stamp-paper is in bodily presence, I cannot have a slip of it till I pay the impost; and if my trade does not enable me to do so, I must give it up, or be a ruined man!

The same consequences must attend the increased expense of the circulation under the proposed measure, as would apply to a tax in any other form. The manufactures, public works, and private speculations, which are making a return, enabling them to defray the charge attending the more expensive medium of circulation, will struggle on as they can, with less profit by the direct amount, and more disadvantages arising from the means of circulation being at the mercy of winds and waves, and subjected to long and perilous transportation before the gold reaches them. Those, on the other hand, whose trade makes more precarious re-

turns, will be no longer able to wait for better times. They will give up all, and the consequences to Scotland—and England also—omitting all allusion to individual distress, will be a black history.

I have already said, that the Fisheries and Kelp shores, and improvements on the more bleak and distant districts, will probably be the first sufferers. And my neighbour replies, with a sweeping argument, that enterprises which cannot support themselves by their own exertions, and natural returns of profit, ought not to have the encouragement of Government—that they are only vain schemes, in which labour and expense are wasted without their bringing the necessary return, and that the force employed in keeping up these barren and fruitless undertakings should, as soon as possible, be directed into a more productive channel. If I urge, that, although these undertakings may not, as yet, have made the full returns expected, yet they support many people, natives of a country otherwise too poor to furnish the means of livelihood to its inhabitants,—why, the answer is equally ready. Let the High-

lander emigrate, or be transported to Botany Bay; and supply his place with sheep,—goats, —anything,—or nothing at all.

I do not mean to deny, sir, that there is general truth in the maxims, which recommend that a free trade be left to sustain itself by its own exertions; deprecating the system of forcing commerce when its natural efforts were not successful, and warning against planting colonies in unhealthy or barren spots, where the colonists must perish, or exist in a state of miserable and precarious dependence on the bounties of the mother country. To these political truths I subscribe cheerfully.—But an old civilian used to tell me, *fraus latet in generalibus;* and no general maxim can be safely, wisely, or justly applied, until it has been carefully considered how far it is controlled by the peculiar circumstances of the case. The precepts of Religion herself, as expressed in the holiest texts of Scripture, have been wrested into sophistry—the soundest political principles may, by the frigid subtleties of metaphysical moonshine, be extended so as, in appearance, to authorise aggressions on national rights, as well

as on the dictates of sound wisdom and humanity.

I have more replies than one to my neighbour's doctrines of Political Economy, (though true in the abstract,) when I consider them as applicable to the case in question.

In the *first* place, I deny that the Scottish Fisheries are in the predicament to which the maxim, quoted triumphantly by my friend Chrysal, applies. I say that they are already supporting themselves, and producing a moderate but certain profit; only that this profit is as yet *so* moderate, that it certainly will not bear an impost of probably five or six per cent upon the gross capital employed; and that, therefore, it is the highest impolicy to smother, by such a burthen, important national undertakings, which are, without such new imposition, in a condition to maintain themselves. It would be breaking the reed ere it had attained its strength, and quenching the smoking flax just when about to burst into flame.

Secondly, Admitting, from the great poverty of the inhabitants, and other discouraging circumstances, that the Scottish fisheries have for

a long time required the support of Government, I still aver, that the expense attending such support has been well and wisely disposed of,—just as a landlord would act not generously only, but most prudently, in giving favourable terms of settlement to a tenant, who was to improve his farm largely. An exotic shrub, when first planted, must be watered and cared for—a child requires tenderness and indulgence till he has got through the sickly and helpless years of infancy. A fishery or manufacture, established in a wild country, and among a population of indolent habits, unaccustomed to industry, and to the enjoyment of the profits derived from it, will at the outset require assistance from the State, till old habits are surmounted, and difficulties overcome. There is something in the nature of the people, who have been long depressed by poverty, resembling the qualities of their own peat-earth. Left alone, it is the most anti-septic and inert of Nature's productions; but when, according to the process of compost invented by the late ingenious Lord Meadowbank, this *caput mortuum* is intermixed with a small portion of active manure, it heats,

ferments, changes its sluggish nature, and fertilizes the whole country in the vicinity. No agriculturist regards the expense of the proportion of manure necessary to commence this vivifying operation; and neither will any wise government regret the outlay of sums employed in exciting the industry, improving the comforts, and amending the condition, of its inhabitants. In the present case, Government has done this duty amply—The tree has taken root, the child is rising fast to youth and manhood—the establishments of the fisheries are in full progress to triumphant success. The question is not, if you are yet to continue your encouragement—nor whether the public is to save some expense by withdrawing it. In these questions there would be a direct and palpable motive, that of a saving to the State, which, so far as it went, would be a real, if not an adequate motive, for breaking up these establishments. But the question at issue turns on this very different point—whether, by a measure obnoxious to Scotland, and in which England cannot challenge an interest remote or direct, you are to adopt an enactment so likely to

create the ruin of these establishments, now that they have already attained prosperity? The wish of many of the wisest English patriots has been accomplished—the barren and desolate shores are compensated in that desolation by the riches of the sea—foreigners are driven from engrossing as formerly their wealth, and selling to Britain herself, at advantage, the produce of her own coasts. Thriving villages are already found where there were scarcely to be seen the most wretched hovels; a population lazy and indolent, because they had no motive for exertion, have become, on finding the employment, and tasting the fruits of industry, an enterprizing and hardy race of seamen, well qualified to enrich their country in peace—to defend her in time of war. *All this* is GAINED. Shall all be lost again, to render the system of currency betwixt England and Scotland uniform? all sacrificed to what I can call little more than a political conundrum? In my opinion, the Dutchmen might as well cut the dikes, and let the sea in upon the land their industry has gained from it. In the case of Holland, she would at least save the money ex-

pended in maintaining her ramparts. In our case, the state gains nothing and loses everything.

Lastly, I would say a word in behalf of the people of Scotland, merely as human beings, and entitled to consideration as such. I will suppose this alteration is recommended by some expected advantages of great importance, but the nature of which are prudently concealed. I will suppose, what is not easily understood, that in some unintelligible manner England is to gain with addition what Scotland is condemned to lose. (The process, by the way, seems to resemble that recommended by Moliere's quack, who prescribes the putting out of one eye, that the other may see further, and more acutely.) I will suppose that our statesmen, by enforcing this measure, condemn to emigration, or transportation —the punishment she inflicts on felons—the inhabitants of distant and desert tracts, on the mainland and in the Hebrides, to save her from some expense, and because she thinks a country so different from her own fertile valleys, cannot be fit for human habitation. In that case, I would say, Consider, first, the character of the

population you are about to consign thus summarily to the effects which must follow the destroying their present means of livelihood. My countrymen have their faults, and I am well aware of them. But this I will say, that there is more vice, more crime—nay, more real want and misery, more degrading pauperism and irremediable wretchedness, in the parish of Saint Giles's alone, than in the whole Highlands and pastoral districts of Scotland, or perhaps in all Scotland together. Poor as the inhabitants are, the wants of the Highlanders are limited to their circumstances ; and they have enjoyments which make amends, in their own way of reckoning, for deprivations which they do not greatly feel. Their land is to them a land of many recollections. I will not dwell on that subject, lest I be thought fantastic in harping on a tune so obsolete. But every heart must feel some sympathy when I say, they love their country, rude as it is, because it holds the churches where their fathers worshipped, and the churchyards where their bones are laid.

This is not all. Mountainous countries inspire peculiarly strong attachments into the na-

tives, showing perhaps, if we argue up to the Final Great Cause, that while it was the pleasure of God that men should exist in all parts of the world, which His pleasure called into being, the Beneficence of the Common Father annexed circumstances of consolation, which should compensate the mountaineers for want of the fertility and fine climate enjoyed by the inhabitants of the plain. Some philosophers, looking to secondary causes, have referred the sense of this local attachment amongst mountaineers to the influence of the sublime though desolate scenery around them, as stamping the idea of a peculiar country more deeply on their bosoms. The chief cause seems to me to be, that such tribes rarely change their dwellings, and therefore become more wedded to their native districts than are the inhabitants of those where the population is frequently fluctuating. The land is not only theirs *now*, it pertained to a long list of fathers before them ; and the coldest philosopher will regard what is called a family estate with greater attachment than he applies to a recent purchase.

But independent of this, the inhabitants of

the wilder districts in Scotland have actually some enjoyments, both moral and physical, which compensate for the want of better subsistence and more comfortable lodging. In a word, they have more liberty than the inhabitants of the richer soil. Englishmen will start at this as a paradox; but it is very true notwithstanding, that if one great privilege of liberty be the power of going where a man pleases, the Scotch peasant enjoys it much more than the English. The pleasure of viewing "fair Nature's face," and a great many other primitive enjoyments, for which a better diet and lodging are but indifferent substitutes, are more within the power of the poor man in Scotland than in the sister country. A Scottish gentleman, in the wilder districts, is seldom severe in excluding his poor neighbours from his grounds; and I have known many that have voluntarily thrown them open to all quiet and decent persons who wish to enjoy them. The game of such liberal proprietors, their plantations, their fences, and all that is apt to suffer from intruders, have, I have observed, been better protected than where

severer measures of general seclusion were adopted. *Haud inexpertus loquor.*

But in many districts, the part of the soil which, with the utmost stretch of appropriation, the first-born of Egypt can set apart for his own exclusive use, bears a small proportion indeed to the uncultivated wastes. The step of the mountaineer on his wild heath, solitary mountain, and beside his far-spread lake, is more free than that which is confined to a dusty turnpike, and warned from casual deviation by advertisements which menace the summary vindication of the proprietor's monopoly of his extensive park, by spring-guns or man-traps, or the more protracted, yet scarce less formidable denunciation, of what is often, and scarce unjustly spelled, "*persecution* according to law." Above all, the peasant lives and dies as his fathers did, in the cot where he was born, without ever experiencing the horrors of a work-house. This may compensate for the want of much beef, beer, and pudding, in those to whom habit has not made this diet indispensable.

It is to be hoped that experimental legislation will pause ere consigning a race which is con-

tented with its situation to banishment, because they only offer at present their hardy virtues and industry to the stock of national prosperity, instead of communicating largely to national wealth. Even considered as absolute paupers, they have some right to such slight support as may be necessary to aid them in maintaining themselves by their own industry. If the poor elsewhere could be maintained without the degrading sense that they were receiving eleemosynary aid, it would be the better for themselves and their country.

I will admit, for argument's sake, that the public funds which have established those fishing stations might have been bestowed to better advantage; still, having been so expended, we ought certainly not to be hasty in withdrawing our support, even if we may judge that it was incautiously granted at first. The philosopher, in the fanciful Tale of Frankenstein, acted unwisely in creating the unnatural being to which art enabled him to give life and motion; but when he had, like a second Prometheus, given sensation and power of thought to the creation of his skill and science, he had no title to desert

the giant whom he had called into existence; and the story shows that no good came of his being discontented with his own handy-work. But I contend, that the establishments to which I allude exhibit nothing save what may render the founders and encouragers proud of the result of their patriotic labours.

I do therefore hope that the present contented and rapidly improving condition of so many fellow-creatures, will be considered as something in the scale, when a measure shall be finally weighed, which, in the opinion of all connected with the north of Scotland, threatens to deprive them of the means of livelihood.

On other national topics I have already said enough. Those who look only at states and ledgers, hold such feelings as arise upon points of national honour, as valueless as a cypher without a numeral prefixed. Right or wrong, however, they still have an effect on the people of Scotland, as all can bear witness who were here when his Majesty honoured the capital of his ancestors with his own presence. We would not plead these too high neither, nor cling tenaciously by antiquated pretensions, which may

obstruct the general welfare of the empire; but we deprecate that sort of change which is made for the mere sake of innovation. A proud nation cannot endure such experiments when they touch honour—a poor one cannot brook them when attended with heavy loss. We are all aware that many changes must of necessity be —the political atmosphere is heavy and gloomy with the symptoms of them,

"And coming events cast their shadows before."

These changes will be wrought in their time; but we trust they will not be forced forward suddenly, or until the public mind is prepared for, and the circumstances of the country require them.

Seasonable improvements are like the timely and regular showers, which, falling softly and silently upon the earth, when fittest to be received, awaken its powers of fertility. Hasty innovation is like the headlong hurricane, which may indeed be ultimately followed by beneficial consequences, but is, in its commencement and immediate progress, attended by terror, tumult, and distress.

This is indeed a period when change of every kind is boldly urged and ingeniously supported, nay, finds support in its very singularity; as the wildest doctrines of enthusiasm have been often pleaded with most eloquence, and adopted with most zeal. One philosopher will convert the whole country into work-houses, just as Commodore Trunnion would have arranged each parish on the system of a man-of-war. Another class has turned the system of Ethics out of doors, and discovers on the exterior of the scull, the passions of which we used to look for the source within. One set of fanatics join to dethrone the Deity, another to set up Prince Hohenloe. The supporters of all find preachers, hearers, and zealots, and would find martyrs if persecuted. We are at such a speculative period obliged to be cautious in adopting measures which are supported only by speculative argument. Let men reason as ingeniously as they will, and we will listen to them, amused if we are not convinced. I have heard with great pleasure an ingenious person lecture on phrenology, and have been much interested in his process of reasoning. But should such a phi-

losopher propose to saw off or file away any of the bumps on my scull, by way of improving the moral sense, I am afraid I should demur to the motion.

I have read, I think in Lucian, of two architects, who contended before the people at Athens which should be intrusted with the task of erecting a temple. The first made a luminous oration, showing that he was, in theory at least, master of his art, and spoke with such glibness in the hard terms of architecture, that the assembly could scarce be prevailed on to listen to his opponent, an old man of unpretending appearance. But when he obtained audience, he said in a few words, "All that this young man can talk of, I have DONE." The decision was unanimously in favour of Experience against Theory. This resembles exactly the question now tried before us.

Here stands Theory, a scroll in her hand, full of deep and mysterious combinations of figures, the least failure in any one of which may alter the result entirely, and which you must take on trust, for who is capable to go through and check them? *There* lies before you a practical

System, successful for upwards of a century. The one allures you with promises, as the saying goes, of untold gold,—the other appeals to the miracles already wrought in your behalf. The one shows you provinces, the wealth of which has been tripled under her management, —the other a problem which has never been practically solved. Here you have a pamphlet —there a fishing town—here the long-continued prosperity of a whole nation—and there the opinion of a professor of Economics, that in such circumstances she ought not by true principles to have prospered at all. In short, good countrymen, if you are determined, like Æsop's dog, to snap at the shadow and lose the substance, you had never such a gratuitous opportunity of exchanging food and wealth for moonshine in the water.

Adieu, sir. This is the last letter you will receive from,

Yours, &c.

MALACHI MALAGROWTHER.

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